DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 877 TM 870 137

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TITLE The Parenting Questionnaire: An Inventory for Assessing Outcomes of Adlerian Parent Groups.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Attitude Change; *Attitude Measures; *Child Responsibility; Higher Education; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; Parenting Skills; Pretesting; Program Effectiveness; Sex Differences; Test Reliability; Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS Adlerian Psychology; *Dreikurs (Rudolf); *Parenting Questionnaire; STEP Program

ABSTRACT

This study field tests and evaluates the Parenting Questionnaire, an instrument designed to assess parental attitudes and behavior, based on the child-raising theories of Dreikurs and Dinkmeyer and the Adlerian model for parent study groups. Dreikurs and Adler stress the purposive nature of children's behavior or misbehavior, and teach parents to develop responsibility in their children by using natural and logical consequences rather than parent intervention or punishment. The STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) Program, which uses reading, group discussion, homework exercises, and role playing, is followed. Three field tests of the experimental form of the Parenting Questionnaire were administered to (1) Sample I--a group of 24 upper-level undergraduate students at a large midwestern university; (2) Sample II--11 mothers enrolled in a parent group based on Dinkmeyer's STEP program; and (3) Sample III--84 parents of third graders in 16 elementary schools in a moderate-sized, middle-class community. The field tests suggested that: (1) the inventory did not measure socially desirable attitudes toward child raising, supporting its validity; (2) the instrument differentiated between parents-in-general and mothers participating in an Adlerian parent group; and (3) the inventory did not yield significantly different mean scores for mothers and fathers. Reliability of the attitude and behavior scales were .76 and .73, respectively. It was concluded that the Parenting Questionnaire would be valuable for elementary school counselors in evaluating the effectiveness of Adlerian parent education groups. (JGL)

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The Parenting Questionnaire:

An Inventory for Assessing Outcomes of

Adlerian Parent Groups

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The Parenting Questionnaire: An Inventory for Assessing Outcomes of Adlerian Parent Groups[a]

The ACES-ASCA Report (1965) on Elementary School Counseling recognized the processes of counseling, consultation, and coordination as the three functions that enable the school counselor to discharge professional responsibilities in the educational setting. Elementary counselors have been exhibiting a greater interest in and a greater emphasis on the consultant role (Bundy & Poppen, 1986; Cobb & Richards, 1983). Umansky and Holloway (1984) write that school administrators have been "largely unimpressed" with a counseling model that concentrates on direct service to individual students, because of its high cost per service ratio and its lack of accountability to the school community. They advocate a counselor-as-consultant model as a more efficient use of counselor services.

The emphasis on consultation can be seen in the increased incidence of consultation between counselors and teachers and in the development by counselors of school-based parent groups (Dinkmeyer & Muro, 1971; Faust, 1968; Kelly, 1976; Veltkamp & Newman, 1976). Cooney (1981) notes that the role of parent educator is a relative new one for counselors; it emerged in the mid 1960s with the elementary school counselor movement. This movement with its emphasis on development and prevention rather than remediation provided an ideal setting for parent education (p. 99).

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a. Copies of the Parenting Questionnaire can be obtained from Jeanne Tiffany, 3017 West 27th St., Lawrence, KS 66044.

Popular types of parent groups include those using behavior modification techniques (Becker, 1971; McDowell, 1976), the Adlerian approach to child rearing illustrated by the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1973; Dreikers, 1958), and Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1970; Veltkamp & Newman 1976). These groups use the same general format: (a) reading a text, (b) group discussion, (c) homework exercises, and (d) role playing parent-child interactions and conflicts.

Croake and Glover (1977), in a review of parent education programs, write that each approach has the same objective: assisting "parents who are attempting to change their method of interaction with their children for the purpose of encouraging positive behavior in their children" (p. 151). Carlson and Russell (1982) explain that while the three approaches have similar formats, they differ in content and in the degree to which they emphasize cognitive, behavioral, and affective modalities to achieve their goals (p. 397).

The shift in counselor role from direct service to consultation has produced a need for instruments and procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of elementary counselor's consultations. Umansky and Hollaway (1984) emphasize the need for systematic evaluation of counselor services. They note that counselors work in an accountability-based system, but give low priority to program evaluation. These authors write: "Evaluation research is a major way of being accountable" (p. 335). Most published reports describe parent programs with little or no attempt to evaluate the outcomes of the programs (Summerlin & Ward, 1981).

This paper describes an evaluation instrument, The Parenting Questionnaire, developed from the writings of Dreikers (Dreikers, 1958; Dreikers & Grey, 1968; Dreikers & Soltz, 1964) and Dinkmeyer (Dinkmeyer, 1968; Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1973; Dinkmeyer & Muro, 1971). The questionnaire assesses the attitudinal component of the STEP parent education program. Dreikers (1964) postulates that mis-

behavior has a purposes and identifies four goals of misbehavior: (a) to obtain special services (attention-getting behavior), (b) to assert control (power-seeking behavior), (c) to hurt others (retaliatory behavior), and (d) to have other expect nothing from the child (showing complete inadequacy). The STEP program uses a lecture-discussion format and stresses the theory of Adler and the techniques of Dreikers (1970). Specifically, the program focuses on the purposive nature of children's behavior/misbehavior and teaches parents to develop responsibility in their children by utilizing natural and logical consequences.

Parents have reported that the parenting techniques learned from Adlerian study groups produce immediate positive changes in children's behaviors (Fears, 1976; Kelly, 1976; Wright 1982). Parents reported a reduction in disruptive, attention-seeking, and annoying child behavior (Kelly, 1976); a more democractic pattern of family interaction, and a decrease in family tension (McDonough, 1976). Esters and Levant (1983) found that the STEP program improved the academic achievement of low-achieving rural elementary children.

Description of The Parenting Questionnaire

The Parenting Questionnaire was developed using the theory of Dreikurs (1958); Dreikurs and Grey (1968), Dreikers and Soltz (1964), and Dinkmeyer and McKay (1973) and includes two scales. The first scale assesses parental attitudes toward child management with items derived from Dreikurs' theory of child management. This 24-item scale uses a Likert-type response format (strongly agree to strongly disagree). The response choices are weighted so responses that strongly agreed with statements supporting Dreikurs' techniques and theories receive a weight of "5" and responses that strongly disagree with the theories and techniques receive a weight of "1".

A sample of items from the attitude scale follow: "Children have a purpose for misbehaving."; "Responsibility for a child's behavior should come from the child."; "A child should be rewarded for performing household tasks."; and "It is the parent's responsibility to control the behavior of their children." A response of "strongly agree" to the first two items is weighted "5". A response of "strongly agree" to items three and four is weighted "1".

The second scale uses a multiple-choice format to assess techniques parents utilize in managing their children's behavior. Parents respond to the scale by indicating the response that most nearly described their usual behavior. This scale includes 14 items describing actual behaviors that children exhibit and responses to these behaviors that parents may make. Each question is based on a specific behavior identified as an area of concern to parents by Dreikurs (1958). Included in this scale are descriptions of situations involving lack of cooperation, refusal to accept responsibility for learning, refusal to eat at meal time, and unwillingness to go to bed at bedtime.

The response options reflect three types of responses that parents might employ.

1) Allowing a logical or natural consequence to occur.

2) Taking charge of the situation.

3) Responding punitively or authoritatively.

The response options were assigned randomly to response position (a, b, or c) for each item to minimize a response set. Punitive responses receive a weight of "1"; responses where the parent intervenes and takes control receive a weight of "2"; and responses allowing a logical or natural consequence to occur are weighted "3".

A sample item from the behavioral scale assessing parental response to refusal to accept responsibility is presented below. The type of parental

behavior suggested by each response option is indicated in parentheses.

What would you do if your child missed a ride to school?

A. Take the child myself (parental intervention)

B. Let the child decide hov he/she will get to school (natural or logical consequence)

C. Punish the child for not being ready on time (punitive response).

Field Testing of the Parenting Questionnaire

The Parenting Questionnaire was administered to three different samples of adults. Data from these samples were used to address the following questions:

1. Does the Parenting Questionnaire mesure socially desirable attitudes toward parenting?
2. Is the scale internally consistent?
3. Is the scale content valid?
4. Do the attitude and behavior scales measure related constructs?
5. Are there significant differences in the mean attitude and behavior score of mothers and fathers?
6. Is there a significant difference in the mean scores of mothers participating in a parent education groups and parents-in-general?

Sample I

The experimental instrument was administered initially to a group of 24 upper-level undergraduate students at a large midwestern university. Students were enrolled in an educational psychology class and had concluded a unit on child behavior and management techniques. The initial administration was used to collect information about the social desirability of the items and to identify items that were unclear to the respondents. After administration of the preliminary form of the questionnaire, an item analysis was conducted. The

item analysis data were used to further refine the instrument. Items with mean item difficulties between 2.0 and 4.0 and item standard deviations greater than .65 were retained. These item selection criteria were used to eliminate socially desirable and socially undesirable items and items that showed limited group variability.

Sample II

After revision, the questionnaire was administered to a group of 11 mothers enrolled in a parent group based on Dinkmeyer's STEP program. During the final session of the parent group, the mothers completed the questionnaire. This field-test was conducted to determine the clarity of the instrument's directions for the general population and to establish suggested time limits for the questionnaire. The participants had no difficulty completing the questionnaire; all completed the questionnaire within 15 to 20 minutes. The mean score for the attitude scale was 90 and the standard deviation was 9.5. The mean score for the behavior scale was 35 and the standard deviation was 5.

Sample III

A second parent sample was used to collect reliability and validity data for the questionnaire. The population included parents of third graders in 16 elementary schools in a moderate-sized, middle-class community. Parents of third graders were chosen for the field test, because they are representative of the parent population of the elementary school and because parental involvement in elementary school declines in the upper elementary grades. A letter asking parents of third graders to participate in the field test was sent home with all third graders in the district; 102 parents representing 12 elementary schools volunteered to participate, and all volunteers were sent a questionnaire. A one-week period was established for data collection. At the end of the week, 84 of the 102 questionnaires were returned for an 84% return rate.

The sample included 53 families, 31 couples (mothers and fathers from the same family) and 22 mothers. There were no male respondents whose wives did not also respond. Marital status of mothers whose husbands did not respond included one never married, 10 divorced, one separated, one widowed, and nine married.

The sample included 36 participants between ages 25 and 35, 43 participants between ages 36 and 45, five participants between ages 46 and 55, and one participant between ages 56 and 65. All but two of the parents had completed high school, 74 parents had completed some college work, and 41 respondents had earned a graduate degree. The ethnic backgrounds of the parents represented were 76 white, two American Indian, two Oriental, one Black, and four non-respondents.

The mean number of children was 2.4 per parent; the number of children reported by individual parents ranged from one child to six children. Twenty-four parents reported previous participation in a parent education program.

Reliability. Internal consistency reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) were computed for the attitudes and behaviors scales. The attitude scale had an internal consistency reliability of .76. The behavior scale had an internal consistency reliability of .73.

Validity Data. Content validity of The Parenting Questionnaire was established by expert judgment. Attitude items were submitted to counselors familiar with Adlerian parent groups who judged the degree to which the items were congruent with the theories of Dreikers and Dinkmeyer. Judgments were made on a five point scale. Items that received mean rating between 4 and 5 were retained. For the behavioral scale, five counselors who conducted Adlerian parent groups were asked to assign the response options to response category (i.e., parental intervention, natural or logical consequence, and punitive response). There was 100% agreement among the judges as to the response illus-

trating a natural or logical consequence, a parental intervention, and a punitive response.

Relationship between the Attitude and Behavior Scales. Dreikurs proposes that attitudes and behaviors are related. The results of this study showed a significant correlation between attitudes and behaviors reported on the questionnaire ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). There was 9% shared variance on the behavior and attitude scales. Therefore the scales measure one construct, but each scale provides unique information about attitudes or preferred behaviors that cannot be obtained from one type of measurement alone.

Social Desirability of the Attitude Items. The usefulness of attitude inventories is dependent upon their ability to measure constructs independent of respondents' desire to give the "right" or socially desirable response. Therefore it was necessary to establish that the attitude instrument did not measure attitudes endorsed by parents-in-general. Specifically, it was necessary to demonstrate that the field test sample's mean response to the attitude scale was significantly different from the mean one would expect after participation in an Adlerian-type parent group. In order to establish a hypothesized mean that would indicate that respondents answered attitude items in the directon suggested by Dreikurs' theory, the number of attitude items (24) was multipled by four (agree/disagree response) to establish a hypothesized mean of 96. A weight of "4" was used since the items were weighted in such a way that a neutral response received a weight of "3", agreement received a "4", and strong agreement received a weight of "5".

The observed mean for the field-test sample of parents was 78.5. The standard deviation was 9.4. The hypothesis that the sample of parents was drawn from a population of parents where the mean was 96 was rejected ($t[83] = -17.06$, $p < .01$). Therefore it was concluded that the attitude scale of The Parenting

Questionnaire did not reflect commonly endorsed parental attitudes toward child rearing.

Differences in the Mean Responses of Males and Female. Analysis of the differences in mean scores of males (fathers) and females (mothers) for the attitude and behavior scales yielded nonsignificant results (F [1, 82] = .88, p > .05, for the attitude scale; F [1, 82] = 1.61, p > .05, for the behavior scale). The means were 79.2 and 77.2 for females and males respectively, for the attitude scale. The standard deviations were 9.5 for females and 9.2 for males. For the behavior scale, the mean score for females was 33.4; the standard deviation was 4.1. Males had a mean score of 31.9 and a standard deviation of 6.1.

These analyses suggest that the attitude and behavioral scales do not measure constructs that yield different results for male and female parents. Specifically males (fathers) are no more likely as a group than females (mothers) as a group to endorse a particular set of attitudes measured by The Parenting Questionnaire. Neither are parents of one sex more likely than parents of the other sex to self-report a preference for punitive, rescuing, or natural consequences as a response to their children.

Responses of Mothers and Fathers in the Same Family. The sample included 31 families in which both the mother and father had responded to The Parenting Questionnaire. The responses of same family parents to the attitudinal and behavioral scales were correlated. Separate coefficients were completed for each scale for each mother-father pair. Coefficients ranged from -.03 to 1.0 for the attitude scale and from -.27 to 1.0 for the behavior scale. The mean correlation cofficient for the attitude scale was .49. A mean correlation coefficient of .44 was computed for the behavioral scale. The hypotheses that the observed mean correlation coefficients for the attitude and behavior scales were

not significantly different from zero were tested. Both null hypotheses were rejected. There was a significant relationship between the responses of mothers and fathers in the same family to the attitude and behavior scales.

Finally the mean for the parent sample was compared to the mean for a small group (n = 11) of mothers participating in an Adlerian parent group. The mean for the parent sample was 78.5; the mean for the mothers participating in the parenting group was 90.0. A non-directional t test for differences in means for independent groups yielded a significant difference in means (t [83] = -11.21, $p < .01$). The mean attitude score for the parent group participants was significantly higher than the mean attitude score for the parent sample. These data suggest that the mean attitude of parents in general differs significantly from the mean attitude of female participants in an Adlerian parent group. These data further suggest that the attitude scale of The Parenting Questionnaire is capable of reflecting changes in attitudes occurring as a result of participation in an Adlerian parent group.

Discussion

Parent education is a vehicle through which counselors can enact a consultant role. Parent study groups are valuable tools for providing parent education. They provide direct service to parents, while providing indirect services to the child (Bundy & Poppen, 1986).

The literature presents a range of types of parent groups available to counselors and includes favorable reports for all types of groups. However, there is limited empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of parenting groups in general and specific types of parent groups in particular (Summerlin & Ward, 1981). The lack of empirical data probably results from the lack of reliable

and valid instruments available to assess the specific hypothesized outcomes of different types of parent groups and from a belief that the outcomes of parent education programs can be assessed only in a naturalistic setting.

While observations of parent-child interactions in either a naturalistic, home setting or a contrived school setting are possible, they are difficult to conduct during the school day and costly to conduct during weekends and evenings. Assessments of the outcomes of parent education groups in the form of knowledge acquired, attitudes held, and self-report of behavior tried offer an intermediate criteria against which to evaluate the effectiveness of parent groups. This is not to say that self-report measures eliminate the need for or can be substituted for observational measures.

Parent education programs such as the STEP program are based upon theories of child development and beliefs about the class of behaviors and attitudes that contribute to effective parenting. Central to many parent education programs are: (a) a knowledge component, parents read books and discuss the concepts presented; (b) an affective component, parents discuss their attitudes and feelings about their children, and their modes of interacting with their children; and (c) a behavioral component where parent role-play interactions with children and complete homework exercises. Self-report inventories completed by parents are a cost-effective way to collect preliminary information about the outcomes of a parent education program.

The present study reports the development and field-testing of an instrument designed to assess parental attitudes toward child management. The Parenting Questionnaire is theoretically based, and items were developed from principles and techniques espoused by Dreikurs and Dinkmeyer as they relate to the Adlerian model for parent study groups. Field-tests of the experimental form of the inventory suggest: (a) that the inventory does not measure socially desirable

attitudes toward child rearing; (b) that the instrument can differentiate between parents-in-general and mothers participating in an Adlerian parent group; and (c) that the inventory does not yield significantly different mean scores for males and female parents.

The Parenting Questionnaire has many potential uses for the counselor whose methods and techniques are based on Adlerian theories and techniques. A counselor can gain valuable information about response preferences and can establish goals for counseling. The direction parent education programs take might also be determined by parental responses to this questionnaire.

With the present emphasis on evaluation of consultation activities, The Parenting Questionnaire can be used with an Adlerian parent group, such as the STEP program, to gain information about parental attitudes and response preferences prior to participation in a parent group. The instrument can also be used to assess attitudes and response preferences after participation in a parent group. Such pre-post measures can provide empirical evidence of the outcomes of the knowledge and attitude components of parent groups.

In summary, The Parenting Questionnaire is a research instrument that can be used by counselors as one component of an evaluation of the outcomes of Adlerian parent groups. The instrument development procedures insure the questionnaire's content validity and preliminary validity studies suggest that the questionnaire is sensitive to the desired outcomes of Adlerian parent groups and does not measure socially desirable attitude toward parenting nor attitudes endorsed with greater intensity by males or females.

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